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Housekeepers' Chat

Friday, October 10, 1930.

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Subject: "Ground Beef in Savory Ways." Information from Lucy Alexander,
Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Leaflet available: "Cooking Beef According to the Cut."

--ooOoo--

Yesterday I promised you a menu for a company dinner. It's all ready for broadcasting, from the Cold Sliced Beef Loaf to the dessert. But before we discuss dinner, how would you like to learn a few things about meat, from a friend of mine who has cooked about 2,000 legs of lamb since I've known her?

Yes, indeed -- 2,000 legs of lamb. If that isn't a record my name's Rosie O'Grady. And my name is not Rosie O'Grady, so that's a record.

Miss Lucy Alexander is the name of this famous person who has cooked nearly 2,000 legs of lamb. She is a member of the United States Bureau of Home Economics. Perhaps you have heard her, on the air. She broadcasts talks about meat, when she can leave her roasting ovens long enough to talk.

The other day I asked Miss Alexander a lot of questions, about cooking the less tender, leaner cuts of meat. These are also, usually, the less expensive cuts. The less tender meats are just as full of food value, and every bit as savory and appetizing, as the higher priced steaks and roasts, if prepared right.

Though by nature these cuts are less tender than some others, the method of preparation can overcome even that. As our Menu Specialist says, since this in the Machine Age, why not let the meat grinder deal quickly and easily with these least tender cuts of beef first? Then the ground meat can be broiled and baked, just as though it were tender to start with.

This is the first question I asked Miss Alexander: "What is your choice among the less tender cuts for grinding? Are't there beef cuts that it is true economy to use as ground meat?"

"Yes," said Miss Alexander. "I like to use the lower round of beef for grinding. Excellent ground meat can also be made from the fore part of the chuck, from lean sections of brisket, and from other well-flavored small pieces of lean. These are more economical than upper round for grinding. The needed fat

is easily supplied by suet, or salt pork, or bacon. Ask the butcher to grind the suet along with the lean. Whether for loaf, or hamburger, or patties, or whatever the dish, meat is best ground medium size.

"Another good point about using the less tender cuts as ground meat," continued Miss Alexander, "is that you can buy exactly the quantity you want. It isn't like buying a rib roast, or a sirloin steak. There you need a rather large, thick piece to cook well. But with ground meat, the meat dealer can accommodate you with a half a pound as easily as with three pounds. And since it is solid meat that you are buying, with no waste, you can tell exactly how many it will serve at the table."

"Excuse me a minute, Aunt Sammy, while I look at the lamb."

While Miss Alexander was gone, I decided to ask her more about Beef Loaf. A good substantial dish, is Beef Loaf -- some like it hot, some like it cold. I like it cold, neatly sliced. By the way, I have a good recipe for Beef Loaf. Do you want a copy for your kitchen cookbook?

When Miss Alexander came back, from testing the roast lamb, I asked her several pointed questions about Beef Loaf -- how to make it rich, how to make it tasty, how to mix the ingredients.

"For a good Beef Loaf," explained Miss Alexander, "start with well-flavored, uncooked meat, from a less tender cut. To give richness, add a generous quantity of mild-flavored salt pork, or beef suet. Personally, I prefer salt pork in meat loaf. To give savour, there should be onion, celery, and parsley, chopped fine, and cooked in the salt pork drippings."

"What about the binder?" I asked.

"Use a thick white sauce," said Miss Alexander. "It holds the tiny particles of meat together, and is better than egg as a binder. Add fine, dry bread crumbs to keep it from packing too solidly."

"And don't forget that the ingredients of a meat loaf should be thoroughly mixed. I work them together with my hands, until I have a perfectly blended, sticky mixture of ground, raw beef, diced browned salt pork, thick milk-and-flour sauce, bread crumbs, and savory seasonings."

"How do you bake it?" I asked. "In a bread pan?"

"No," said my friend. "No. I bake a meat loaf on just the same principle that I roast a tender cut of meat. Instead of packing the mixture down in a deep pan, where only the top can brown, I mold it into a loaf, on heavy paper. Then I slip it, paper and all, onto a rack in an open roasting pan, and put it into a moderate oven. I never add a drop of water, and never put a lid over it. And I never have to baste the meat loaf."

"Does it slice well?" I asked. "does it slice well, when cold?"

"Very well," said Miss Alexander. "A meat loaf of this kind slices well, either hot or cold. For cold slicing, let it stand over night, to chill thoroughly. Then you can slice it thin enough to make sandwiches for the children's lunch box, or to serve for a guest luncheon."

I thanked Miss Alexander for her answers to my questions, and told her I'd be back again some day.

"No doubt about that," said Miss Alexander. "Never have I seen such a hungry mill as yours -- may you never get out of grist, Aunt Sammy."

Now shall we write the menu? Cold Sliced Beef Loaf; French Fried Potatoes; Baked Stuffed Cucumbers; Chili Sauce; and for dessert, Ginger Pear Preserves, Cream Cheese, and Crackers.

Right good menu, isn't it? The recipe for the Beef Loaf is pretty long, so I won't broadcast it. If you want the recipe, please send for it.

There are directions for French Fried Potatoes in the Radio Cookbook, on page 20. Don't try to cook too many potatoes at one time. A cupfull is enough. As soon as they are golden brown, remove them from the kettle of fat, drain on clean, absorbent paper, and sprinkle with salt. Serve the potatoes right away, while they're hot and crisp.

There's a recipe for Baked Stuffed Cucumbers in the Radio Cookbook also, on page 17, top of the page.

Yesterday I broadcast the recipe for Ginger Pears -- so now our dinner is done -- that is, all but the marketing, cooking, serving, and dishwashing. Let the company help with the dishwashing -- they really should, after such a good dinner as this will be.

By the way, when you come to the dessert course -- Ginger Pears, Cream Cheese, and Crackers -- the Menu Specialist says that an especially attractive way to serve the cream cheese is to press it through a rather coarse sieve, and let it fall on the serving dish in a fluffy pile. Serve the pear preserves in another attractive dish.

Now let's assemble our company dinner again: Cold Sliced Beef Loaf; French Fried Potatoes; Baked Stuffed Cucumbers; Chili Sauce; and for dessert, Ginger Pear Preserves, Cream Cheese, and Crackers.

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